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THis little Treatiſe, (tending towards the vindication of a conſiderable priviledge of the Saints of God, from the uſe and exerciſe whereof they have in former dayes been reſtrained, under ſevere penalties, and preſſing them to the performance of a morall duty, which ſome have indeavoured to diſcharge them of, by an attempt for it's encloſure, unto perſons peculiarly appointed to take care thereof,) being requeſted thereunto, I make bold to recommend unto thy ſerious peruſall. The evidence which the Author (whom I know not) hath given herein of his piety, modeſty, and learning, will I ſuppoſe find a regard even with thoſe who are otherwiſe minded, as to that which he pleadeth for. I ſhall only ſay, that as to the theſis it ſelfe by him maintained, (though he build it not on thoſe principles, which in Church affaires I owne as the mind of God, and proceed upon; nor extend the priviledge and duty therein aſſerted, to their juſt liberty and compaſſe, yet as to what he hath undertaken,) he hath laid ſuch foundations, and given ſuch evidence to his inferences from them, that I hope the truth of it may thereby be cleared to ſome, whoſe concernment it is to owne it, before they come to give their account.

IOHN OWEN.

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IOHN OWEN.

The Private Christians
NON VLTRA,
OR,
A PLEA
For the LAY-MAN'S *Interpreting the* SCRIPTVRES.

Written by PHILOLAOCLERUS.

Despise not the day of small things.

Divinus etenim sermo, sicut mysteriis prudentes exercet, sic plerunque superficie simplices refovet; habet in publico, unde parvulos nutriat, servat in secreto, unde mentes sublimium in admiratione suspendat; quasi quippe fluvius (ut ita dixerim) planus & altus, in quo & agnus ambulet, & elephas natet.
Greg. epist. ad Leand. c. 4. præfat. in JOB.

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That private Christians may privately meet weekly, upon some working day, to pray, read, and joyne together in the interpreting of Scriptures, for the building up of each other in knowledge and holynesse.

Cap. 1.

The opening of the Termes.

IN the Holy Scripture there is a difference made among those that belong to the Church of Christ, whereof some are called to *rule*, others are called to *submit*. Heb. 13. 17.

These rulers are men set apart by imposition of hands, they are men in office, commonly called Ministers; *clerus in ecclesiâ*, mentioned in the Scripture under severall titles; when their holynesse is imply'd, they are said to be *men of God*; when their vigilancy, *watchmen*; when their courage, *Souldiers*; when their painfullnesse, *harvest laborers*; when their care over their flock, *shepheards*; when their wisedome, *overseers*; when their necessary use in preserving and informing men, *the salt of the earth*, and *the light of the world*.

These that are to submit, are said to be under the *charge* of others, others must *account* for them, they have their severall titles, sometimes cald *hearers*, *flock*, *saints*, *virgins*, *Gods heritage*; *clerus ecclesia*. These are *private Christians*, whereof. Act. 20. 28. Heb. 13. 7.

1. Some are learned in tongues and sciences, as were *Grotius*, *Selden*, and many others: who, by [a] *Bishop Hall*, are allowed to interpret, [a] *Case of Conse.* decad. 3. cas. 10. p. 348.

terpret, and admired for their works. If these men had been denyed their rights, they were able (as being of age) to have pleaded for themselves.

2. Others are not learned in the one or the other, but they are diligent in reading or hearing, a peculiar people, zealous of good workes, anointed with the spirit, taught of God, having the word of Christ dwelling in them richly, able to give an account of the hope that is in them, and that are not ashamed of the Gospell of Christ, because it is the power of God unto salvation. These *private Christians* are here meant

Privately meeting; this notes the place cheifely and not the number of persons meeting.

Of Places.

1. Some are *publicke*: The Jewes had their *Tabernacle* and *Temple*, the Gentiles their *delubra, Fana, &c.* the Christians their, *Basilica, Ecclesia, Memoria* [a], *paroechiæ, martyria*, &c. their Churches now; but whether only since the first three hundred yeares, as [b] *Vedelius* Contends, I shall not enquire.

a *Memoria Martyrum ibi est Mediolanensium, Gervasii, & Protasii.* August. de civit. Dei. l. 22. c. 8.

2. Some are *private*, which the Apostle cals *ἰδίους* houses, so women, *si quid discere volunt*, if they will learne any thing, must aske their husbands at *home*.

b Epist. Ignat. ad Magn: Exercit. 2. c. 4. 1 Cor. 11. 22.

Weekly; (i.e.) if men so please, not that any necessity is intended.

Upon some working day; this speakes the time for the exercise.

Of *Time* some is *solemne* and *sacred*: The *Romanes* had their *dies festi* and *feriati*, their holy dayes, and dayes for sacrifice; so under the Gospell the Lord hath *his day*, which by [a] *Ignatius* as well as *S. John* is called *κυριακὴ*, and by [b] *Justin Martyr ἡμέρα ἡλίου*. *The Lords day, Sunday*. The day of publicke meeting.

a. Epist. ad Mag. b Apolog. 2. pro Christ.

Some is *common*, given unto us by God, in which we are to doe all the worke we have to doe, this common time makes up our working dayes; it is expressed here to *meete* on a *working day* and in a *private place*, that so Christians may be ready to give all possible respect unto the publick ordinance on the Lords day; For many times that which is lawfull in it self, becomes unlawfull through miscarriage. And here I will farther adde, that although it is to be found in the Acts of the Apostles, that the Christians continued in duty untill midnight, and also in [c] *Pliny*, &c. that they met *ante lucem*, before day to sing Psalmes, &c. yet

c. l. 10. Epist. 97.

in

in regard it gave so great offence to the *Gentiles*, as appeares by d *Minutius Felix* and others, Christians should make it their great care to meete in the day time, that so every concernment of this private service and freewill offering may be clothed with innocency.

d in his Octavius.

To interpret the Scriptures;

Some Scriptures are { *darke and obscure.* / *plaine & easy.*

The *darker* and *more obscure* places are wrapp'd up in such mysterys, that the best accomplishments of any in the world are not sufficient for them, and if men be not here modest and sober in their expositions, they may soone make themselves as ridiculous as the *Monke, Paræus* a speakes of, who derived the word *Apocalypsis* from *apo, quod est, re; & clypsor, clypsaris, quod est, velo, velas.*

a *Comment on Rev. c. 1. v. 1.*

The more *plaine* and *easy places* are the *milke* the Apostle speakes of provided by God for *Babes.*

To interpret or expound; b *Rivet* saith there is a twofold *interpretation.*

b Isag. ad Script. Sacr. c. 14.

1. The one *circa dictiones & earundem propriam significationem;* concerning words and their proper signification, which he cals a *version*, *paraphrase* or *metaphrase*, rendring the originall in a more knowne tongue.

2. The other is *in judicatione sensûs ex intentione ejus qui scripsit;* which may be call'd, with *Bishop Hall*, the *giving the sense of a text.*

a *Glassius* makes two parts of interpretation.

One is *veri & genuini sensûs investigatio.*

a *Ib.* Phil. Sac. l. 2. part. 2. p. 456.

The other is *ejusdem plana & perspicua enarratio;* a searching out of the true and genuine meaning of a place, and then a cleare and perspicuous reporting of it.

'Twere needlesse to say any thing to the other dutyes of *praying and reading*, because it is granted on all hands that Christians may meet for such performances.

The last words expresse the end of the meeting, *to build up, &c.* which are laid downe so plainly, that if a man should use words to open them he would expose himselfe, probably, to that censure some *expositors* lye under, who, after some pains, leave texts more intricate then they found them.

The summe of all then is this. *That private Christians though neither*

ther ordained, nor learned in Arts and tongues, having the words of Christ dwelling in them richly, zealous of good workes, may meet weekly if they please, in some of their owne private houses, upon some working day, to interpret and give the sense of some more usefull and more easie places in the booke of God, for the building up of each other in knowledge and holinesse, which shall be proved by proceeding thus.

Cap. 2.

Containing the Arguments, by which 'tis proved lawfull for private Christians to interpret.

First of all, it is not to be found in all the book of God, that the *worke of interpretation* is made proper to the *Ministry*. Learned men may, the Scribes did interpret, who yet were of severall Tribes. Tis granted that the publike interpretation, in the face of the Congregation, upon the Lords day, belongs to men in office, and so doe also the performance of other duties, which no man surely will say are peculiar to them; as for instance, the minister is the mouth of the Congregation, and it is his duty *in publicâ precatione aliis voce præire*, as *Sharpius* contends [a]. But what then? may not private Christians pray privately in their families, closets, and occasionall meetings?

v. *Drusius de tribus sectis. lib. 2. cap. 12.*

(a) *Symph. Proph. & Apost. pag. 218.*

The *Assembly of Divines* in their larger Catechisme, in answer to that question, whither the word of God be to be read of all, say thus, although all are not to be permitted to read the word publikely to the Congregation, yet all sorts of people are bound to read it apart by themselves and with their families. Whither the *Lection of the King* mentioned by Mr. *Lightfoot* * and *Ainsworth** in his Annotations, were justifiable by Gods law, is very doubtfull, as some conceive *. But however the Kings rendring of the Law is an extraordinary service. And here it will not be amisse to take notice of what * *Atterfoll* saith of private Christians. *This shall be a singular commendation unto us, if we so order our severall charges and places of government, as that they may be called rather Churches, then private families; rather Schooles, then houses; rather temples of God, then dwellings of men; rather Tabernacles set up to serve the Lord, then buildings erected to serve our selves. Now we shall attaine to this praise and estimation among the faithfull, if our*

*Temple service cap. 17. sect. 1.
*On Deut. 31. v. 11.
* Vid. Jackson. Deolate in loc.
* Comment. on Philem. v. 1, 2.

houses

houſes do reſemble Churches, by the practiſe of ſuch exerciſes as are performed in it. For the Maiſter is both a King and a Paſtor within his owne houſe; a King to rule and correct, a Paſtor to inſtruct and reprove; yea to remove ſuch as are obſtinate and obdurate. Let us therefore all of us ſet up little Churches in our houſes, let us uſe in them prayer to God, Catechizing of our youth, teaching of the Ignorant, reading of the Scriptures, ſinging of Pſalmes, conferring one with another, examining of our people, taking an account how they profit, comforting them that are weake, encouraging them that are willing, diſcountenancing them that are froward and untoward, ſhewing gentleneſſe unto all, ſuffering the evill, and inſtructing them with meekneſſe that are contrary minded.

Secondly, private Chriſtians, though not in *office*, nor learned *in languages*, are *bound* to read the word, and no where forbid to interpret. Read it they ought. Here then lets ſee what this word is which they muſt read: *Andrew Willet*(*a*) ſaith that the *Scripture is not the letter, but the ſenſe thereof.* So alſo *Thorndike* (*b*), *the Word of God is not the letter and ſyllable, but the ſenſe and meaning of the Scriptures.* If ſo, then all thoſe places in the Law, Prophets and Apoſtles which command theſe *private* men to *read*, do alſo command them, to *render the ſenſe* of all thoſe places they do read unto themſelves, which is *interpretation*: if then every particular man be to interpret to himſelfe, why may we not ſay that *vis unita fortior*, that two are better then one? ſhall συνεργια be encouraged into the world againe? muſt men turne *Monkes* when they read and interpret? If any man ſhould queſtion whither a private man be not enjoyned to interpret to himſelfe what he reads, I could wiſh he would conſider, whether that were a wholeſome and pertinent queſtion, which *Phillip* offered to the *Eunuch*; *underſtandeſt thou what thou readeſt?* *Chryſoſtome* is much in the commendation of *Phillip*, for his ſeaſonable queſtion and prudent inſinuation, *vide Philippi philoſophiam*; and much in the praiſe of the *Eunuch*, for the improvement of his time, *Eunuchus & in foro, & in curru vectus, lectioni Scripturarum attendebat, ſed vos hoc non agitis, nullus enim veſtrûm in manibus habet librum, ſed omnia potius quàm librum.* The *Eunuch was for his booke, we are for all things but our bookes.* Were Chriſtians permitted to read, and tied up ſo, as that they ought not to interpret to themſelves, they would read

a *Synop. Papiſmi* p. 46.
b *Relig. Aſſem.* c. 6. p. 177.
Eccleſ. 4. 9.
Act. 8. 30.
in loc.

without *understanding*, which is as unseemly, as to *pray without understanding*; neither would they fare much better then the *Romans* now with their *unknowne tongue*, or then the *Romans* of old, when 'twas *capitall* for any, except the *Quindecemviri*, to read the *Prophesies of the Sybills*, as * *Justin Martyr* observes.

Thirdly, I shall lay downe some texts, that charge private men with the duty of *teaching* one another. *Col.* 3. 16. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdome, teaching and admonishing one another.*

The *persons* here concerned to *teach*, are not only men in *office*, but *private men*, whether learned, or no, tis a duty charged upon al men, *mundani & sæculares* (i. e.) that according to *Chrysostome*, all that have Wife, Children, Servants, and Soules to save, must teach. *This duty is double*,

1. The *one* concernes a man towards himselfe ἐνοικείτω, the word must dwell richly in him, or rather *indwell* in him, as an ingrafted and incorporated word. *Alexander* was wont to lay *Homers Iliad's* under his pillow, but Christians should lay up Christs word in their *hearts*: they should so concoct and digest the word, as to turne it into *succum & sanguinem*, into pure nourishment, that if there were any such thing in the world as *Transubstantiation*, it should be here. Men must *omnia iterùm atq; iterùm versare*, search and search againe, till the word be as well known to them, as those that live in the same house, *intus & in cute*. They should not let the word *quasi peregrinum foris stare*, stand at the door like a stranger: now as a means whereby the word of Christ may dwell richly in us, *Dr. Hammond* observes that Christians are to teach and admonish one another, which leads me to the

2. *Duty*, which concernes a man towards others, διδάσκοντες. There hath been a double mistake about this word.

Some are apt with *Estius* and *Piscator*, to say that here is ἀναρμοστία an incongruity, making the text to speake false *Greeke*, and then correct it: these men I find * *Heinsius* to deale with, and confute with a παρενθήκη.

Others conceiving the word to lay too much duty upon private Christians, seeme to mince it, allowing men to teach the Scriptures, but not to interpret them: with these I have now to do. *Zanchy* saith, that to teach, is *Scripturam ad aliorum usum interpretari*,

* *Apol.* 2. θάνατοι ὠρίσθη κατὰ τῶν τὰς Ὑστάσπου, ἢ Σιβύλλης, ἢ τῶν προπηγῶν βίβλους ἀναγινωσκόντων.

Lactant. inst. l. 1. c. 6.

Chrysost. in loc.

Trap. in loc.

Plut. in vit.

Chrys.

of Frater: correp. p. 6.

* *solicitè in authore hoc solœcismos excusant, cùm ipsi potius accusandi sunt, qui tam temerè judicium tulerunt. Exercit. in No: Test. in loc.*

pretari, to interpret the Scriptures to the edification of others; and there will be the leſſe doubt whether *Zanchy* be in the right, if it be obſerved that Chriſt makes uſe of the ſame word, when he commands his Apoſtles to teach all nations, διδάσκειν. Mr. *Leigh* ſaith it may generally be taken for all the parts of the Apoſtolicall and Eccleſiaſticall miniſtry. Dr. *Hammond* puts ſome kind of honour upon the word, making it to import the worke of the Paſtor or Biſhop, whiles διαγγελίζεσθαι, κηρύσσειν, and μαθητεύειν import rather the worke of the Evangeliſt. The Evangeliſt was to preach to thoſe *without*, the Paſtor or Biſhop was to teach and build up thoſe *within*. Now if a Paſtor or Biſhop may interpret, becauſe Chriſt hath bid him go and teach; why may not we conceive ſo alſo concerning the private Chriſtian, who is bid to teach untill we heare from Chriſt to the contrary? *Chryſoſtome* is very full to this purpoſe, *Dic mihi, ſi qui ad literatores abeunt, perpetuò in elementis addiſcendis perſiſterent, annon multum laboris præceptori exhiberent? quouſq; vobis &c.* (i.e.) Tell me, what will ye never have learnt your letters? muſt I be troubled with you alwaies? twas not ſo with the Apoſtles, they were wont to teach for a while, and then make their beſt Scholler teacher to the reſt, and haſten away to another place; I could wiſh you would but looke into the world and ſee what want of Paſtors there is; *ſed vos me detinetis hîc affixum*. But if you did, 'twere not ſafe for me to go from you yet, for I have not perfected my work among you. *Chryſoſtome* was much moved that he had taught them ſo long, and they had profited ſo little, whereas they might haue been able ſo to have taught themſelves, as to have ſpared him for thoſe places in the Country that had more need. But what was it he would have them teach one another? ſurely 'twas the *Scripture*; for in the ſame place he calls to them, *comparate vobis Biblia*, to get Bibles, at leaſt to get the *New Teſtament*. But what were they to teach one another from *theſe Scriptures*? Surely they were not to teach one another how many times [*a*] or [*b*] was uſed in the *N. T.* the worke of the *Maſorites* under the old; but to teach one another the things belonging to their eternall peace. But it may be that *Chryſoſtome* would have them teach one another the Scriptures, but not interpret the Scriptures. You ſay well, this is ſomething, and when you ſhew me a man that hath found out a *new way* to *teach*, and

Matth. 28. 20. *Crit. ſac.*

Epiſc. jura diſ. 3. c. 16.

in loc.

not give the *sense* of what he *teacheth*, which is *interpreting*; then it may be, I will beleive, that *Chrysostome* and *St. Paul* would have private men to teach, but not interpret. I will now returne to *Zanchy* againe, and see what he adds concerning admonishing one another, in regard he was so expresse, telling us that to teach was to interpret. Νουθετεῖν *commonefacere*, to admonish, (i.e.) saith he νοῦν τιθέναι *in animum ponere, imprimere & insculpere*, to presse and urge upon the Conscience what you have taught: a man must admonish those *qui sciunt & pigri sunt*, saith *H. Cardinal.* or as *Calvin*, because *virtus laudatur & alget, simul addit admonitionē, quæ est veluti doctrinæ stimulus.* (i.e.) A man, I say, must admonish those that know their Masters will, and do it not; the word must be enforced upon their hearts, that have golden tongues, and leaden heeles, that can talke richly, but walke shamefully. Tis not enough for one private Christian to teach another, (i. e.) to informe his understāding; but he must also admonish another, (i.e.) apply what he hath taught, to reforme the affection. To this purpose doth *Zanchy* open the text, whence he also raiseth a Doctrine which I shall here insert.

in loc.

in loc.

Observa. Docendi munus, non solùm palàm & publicè in Ecclesiâ, sed privatim & secretò in ædibus quoque debere vigere, & Christianos teneri se mutuò docere, & adhortari privatim. (i. e.) the businesse of teaching is not only relating to the publick in the Congregation; but private Christians ought to teach and admonish one another in their owne houses. I know by this time, some will be ready to say, that if private Christians may *teach* and *apply*, they may not only *interpret*, but *preach* also; for what is *preaching*, but *teaching* and *applying*? And here they will inveigh against all private meetings, and private persons interpreting, as plaine preaching; resolving to starve their poor soules, rather then refresh them at a neighbours house. But good Reader weigh that which *Byfeild* hath by way of *objection* and *answer*.

in loc.

Ob. "It seems this place favours the opinion of such as hold that "Christian neighbours met together upon the Lords day, or at o- "ther times, when there is no publick exercise, may labour to e- "difie themselves by instructing one another, out of the word "privately.

"*R.* It is not unlawfull so to do, and this place doth approve of it,

"it, ſo as they keep within their bounds, viz. that the matter "taught be not againſt piety, the true peace of *Zion*. And that "the manner be plaine and familiar, as Family inſtruction ſhould "be, by keeping on foot publike doctrine, by conference, pro-"pounding of doubts, or inſtructing of the ignorant, out of ſuch "places as they do undoubtedly underſtand.

Biſhop Davenant *to the ſame purpoſe*: "Primus uſus eſt, ut Chriſti-"ani (etiam Laici) ſeſe mutuò doceant & inſtituant in rebus ad fi-"dem pertinentibus, & quam ſibi compararunt ſcientiam ex Scrip-"turis, expromant ad fratres ædificandos cum opus fuerit. Quam-"vis enim munus, publicè, cum autoritate, docendi, incumbit mini-"ſtris; officiũ tamen, privatim, ex charitate, docendi, incumbit cui-"libet privato, cui datur facultas & occaſio alios in religionem "& fide ædificandi. *The ſumme of this I find in* Elton. Tis not the *in loc.* "Miniſters office alone to teach and admoniſh, though eſpecially, "and in peculiar ſort it belong to him; but it is the duty of all "that profeſſe Chriſt, they are to teach & admoniſh one another, "as occaſion is offered &c, yea private perſons may ſometimes "inſtruct teachers in ſome things in private, examples we have in "*Act.* 18. 26. poor *Aquila* and *Priſcilla* inſtructed eloquent "*Apollos*; the text ſaith, whom when *Aquila* and *Priſcilla* had heard "they tooke him unto them, and expounded to him the way of "God more perfectly. We ſee then our duties, now this duty is "little thought on or practiſed, nay I may adde tis much op-"poſed.

In the old Teſtament God was remarkeably ſevere, againſt all 2 Cron. 26. v. 16.–22.
that did intrude upon the *Prieſts office*, *Uzziah* the King was ſmit-
ten with Leproſy, for offering to burne incenſe; yet as the Prieſts 2 Cron. 17. 9.
were to teach the people, ſo were the Jews to teach their Children, Deut. 11. 18. 19.
2 *Chron.* 17. 9. *Deut.* 11. *v.* 18, 19. in both which places there is
the ſame *Hebrew* * word, and rendred by the *Septuagint* by the * לְמַד Διδάσκειν.
ſame word * *St. Paul* made uſe of *Col.* 7. 16. which imports the
ſame duty.

The Preiſts were to teach, and to interpret the Law, and the
Scribes, as *Thorndike* reports out of *Philo*, of the *Eſſenes*, *lib. omnem Relig. Aſſem.*
probum liberum eſſe. Coming to their holy places called Synagogues c. 3.
they ſit downe in ranks, according to yeares, the younger under the El-
ders, with a fit decorum, diſpoſed to heare, then one taketh the booke

and readeth, another of the best practised cometh afterwards and recognizeth that which was least understood; that is, expounds. So *Is. Casaub.* speaking of the *Scribes*, saith that *legem populo legebant—ac si opus esset, interpretabantur.* i. e. they did read the law to the people, and if need were, expounded it.

* *Exer: tertia, ad Appa: Annal. Baro. diat. 9.*

So were the Fathers of Families, men not in office, to teach the law and expound it: From *Godwin* it appeares, that as the *publike ministeriall* expositon of the law belonged to the Priests and Prophets, so a *private Chatecheticall* expositon of the law belonged to the Masters of Families. *Deut. 6. v. 6, 7. These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy Children, and thou shalt talke of them, when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou lyest downe, and when thou risest up.* Here we will note *two things.*

Jew. Antiq. lib. 1. c. 6.

two things. 1. The *duty*, teach.
2. The *persons* to be taught, children.

1. The duty, teach them diligently, or whet them, i. e. as *Ainsworth* saith, *often, earnestly and diligently teach them, that they may pierce the hearts of thy Children to understand and affect them.*

in loc.

2. The persons to be taught, thy children: *the Hebrewes understand not the naturall sons only, but Schollers also or Disciples*; the manner how the father should teach his Child, is set downe in *Exod. 12. 26, 27. and it shall come to passe, when the Children shall say unto them, what meane you by this service, that ye shall say it is the sacrifice of the Lords passover, who passed over the houses of the Children of Israel in Ægypt, when he smote the Ægyptians, and delivered our houses.*

Ainsw. in loc.

ib. The Jewes were to teach their Children, not only the outward *rite*, but the *meaning* of it also, accordingly they hold, from *Exod. 23. v. 14, 15.* and *Deut. 16. v. 14, 16. that every child that could hold his Father by the hand, and go up from Jerusalem gates, to the mountaine of the Temple, his Father was bound to cause him to go up, and appeare before God with him, to the end he might catechise him in the commandements.*

If a child asked this question, *what meaneth this service?* 'Tis to be supposed, that the *answer was to this purpose*.

1. Touching the name of it, tis called the *Passeover* from an *Hebrew* word signifying to passe by, or passe over &c. as the Jews are called

called *Hebrews*, from *Eber*, a word of the ſame ſignification, relating to the paſſage of *Abraham* over *Euphrates*, as ſome thinke. Becauſe *Pharaoh* had oppreſſed Iſrael, Gods firſtborne, therefore God paſſed over the *Iſralites*, and ſlew his firſtborne. *Selden de Lydis, Syris. prol. c. 2. B. Babington in loc.*

2. The outward element, the *res terrena*, was a Lamb; and why a Lamb? becauſe the Lamb doth excellently ſet forth Chriſt our Paſſeover, who is already ſacrificed for us; the *Paſchall Lamb* was *perfectus, maſculus, anniculus*, a male of a year old, without blemiſh, which repreſented Chriſt who was without ſpot, dividing the ſpoile with the mighty, having power given him over all fleſh, having the keyes of Hell and Death, the keyes of the Kingdome of Heaven, ſo that none can go downe to the chambers of death without his leave, or come off from the torments of Hell without his warrant, or enter in at the gates of glory without his favour. *Gerrard. loc. com. Tom. 4. de ſac. c. 4.*

3. The action of the Sacrament.

1. *Segregatio*, the Lambe was to be ſevered from the flock; ſo was Chriſt ſet apart by the Father for the worke of Redemption, and will not you ſet your ſelfe apart for his ſervice? *Taylor on Types*

2. *Mactatio*, the Lamb was ſlaine; Chriſt died for the ſins of the world.

3. *Aſſatio*, roaſted with fire, Chriſt was pierced through, faſtened to the Croſſe, and did undergo the fire of his Fathers wrath, that ſo he might become food for ſinners.

Manducatio, the Lamb was to be eaten; we muſt *eate Chriſts fleſh and drinke Chriſts blood. Ioh. 6. 56.*

4. Communicants, not forreiners nor hired ſervants, but all men and women belonging to the Congregation of Iſrael, and Proſelites alſo, if they were circumciſed.

5. The end, *ut eſſet memoriale præteriti & figura futuri*, that we might keep in mind the deliverance that is paſt, and that it might figure forth the greater deliverance by Chriſt, which was then to come.

To *whet* this doctrine upon the heart of his *Hebrew* child, he might tell him, that as the Lamb was to be eaten with *ſoure herbs*, ſo ſhould he thankfully remember the hardſhip of *Ægypt*, from which God had delivered him, as alſo to come before the Lord at this Feaſt in the bitterneſſe of his Soule for ſin; when the leaven was to be caſt out of the houſe, ſin was to be caſt out of the ſoule, and

and then the offering would be accepted. Some such answer as this, they were to give by Gods law; and they did so, saith *Godwin*: certainly here was *verbi & expositionis conjunctio*, interpretation of Scriptures; and yet the Father was bound to it, and it may be, if his *poor neighbour* had asked the like question with his child, he might without sin, have given a like answer. But before I passe to another argument, I will lay downe the Iudgement of some men, concerning the duty of a Father, because I meet with many, that will not allow the Father to interpret the Scriptures to his Child. In *Hildersham* I find thus, *no Minister is more straightly charged of God, to teach and Catechise his flock, then you (Parents) to instruct your children. In Dyke* that *there are two speciall duties of the Pastor respecting Gods service, preaching, and praying; in both these in some measure should the governers of the Family be like the Pastors of the Church. *They are also greatly deceived, who take themselves to be discharged of their duty, when they have taught them* (their Children) *the ten commandements, the Lords prayer, and the Creed, or the Articles of faith, because they say they have done what they can, and are able to performe no more. If they can do no more, it is a shame for them that they will be Fathers, before they can do that which is the duty of Fathers; it is one thing to teach them to say them, an other to understand them: it is not enough for us to help them to speake the words, unlesse we labour to make them conceive the meaning of the words. The commandements of the law, and the petitions of the Lords prayer, stand not in the bare words, but in the true meaning: let them know therefore, that they must render a greater account, then of teaching them to utter and pronounce the words; they must cause them to understand them, they must sow the seeds of Christian Religion in their hearts, they must instruct them with all diligence, they must exhort them with all earnestnesse, they must charge them to feare God, and to walke in his wayes; that so their children may be made Gods children, and so give them to him againe, of whom, by whose blessings at the first they received them.*

Godw. in Jew. Ant. l. 3. c. 4. Rivet. Com. in Exod. 13. v. 16.

On Ps. 51 lect. 58.

Com. on Phil. vers. 2.

Atterſol. on Phil. v. 1. 2.

Synag. Judai. c. 3. 'quiſquis autem ante tempus tredecim annorum illorum peccaverit ejus pœna patrem manet.

All this I suppose amounts to that, which *Buxtorphius* relates from the Jewes; that they looked upon the sins of their Children as their owne, till their children came to thirteen yeares of age. And if so, lets not envy parents the best advantage they can make of Gods word, by interpreting it unto, and whetting it upon them.

And

And it being all one whether these duties be performed in one Family, or a collection of more, as Dr. Owen *observes.* I will go on to another argument. Duty of Pastors and People p. 52.

Fourthly, it may be considered what the Scripture saith concerning private Christians *edifying* one another. 1 *Thes.* 5. 11. *edifie one another,* οἰκοδομεῖτε, the same word made use of when Ministers are commanded to edifie. 1 *Cor.* 3. 10. *Eph.* 4. 12.

1. *Quid nominis,* the word signifies to build, and the Metaphor is taken from Carpenters and builders, who by degrees carry on and raise up their worke, untill they have brought it to some perfection; this Metaphor the holy Ghost seems much delighted with; tis applied to the Saints, who are the Temple and house of God, 1 *Pet.* 4. 17. in which he dwelleth by his Spirit, the whole company of the elect, are compared to a great city, the new Jerusalem built up of believers, as living stones upon Christ as the corner stone.

2. *Quid rei,* to edifie or build up one another, is to further and help forward one another by all holy meanes in grace and goodnesse, to exhort, comfort, and reprove one another dayly, *Heb.* 3. 13. to provoke each other to love and good works, to warne them that are unruly, to *rebuke our neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Levit.* 19. 17. The Originall signifies to rebuke with conviction, or argument, by word, to shew what is right, and to refell the contrary, and tis rendred sometimes to reason, sometimes to convince, and to reprove: if we do it not, we shall be lyable to the punishment of other mens sin. *Quare si quis ferat peccatum in altero, jam contraxit peccatum ipse.* To edifie is to make a gratious use of the λογια ζωντα or ζωοποιοῦντα, *verba viva, & vivificantia,* the lively Oracles, or lifegiving Oracles, the Scriptures, for all those holy ends and purposes of exhortation, comfort, admonition &c. The Carpenter can doe nothing without his rule and square, the Christian can doe nothing in this building without Gods word, which is the *rule, Gal.* 6. 16. & as builders of a house do mutually help on another, till they have finished, so every private Christian should be ready to serve his brother in love, till the Temple be compleated. I will here lay downe one instance. *Aniſw. in loc.* *Job.* 13. 3. & 32. 12. *Isa.* 11. 4. *Dr. Rainolds Cens. lib. Apoc. Tom. 2. prælect.* 138

Put the case many poor Christians meeting together a little before Easter, fall to discourse, that Easter day is a great day, ωγά-

λη ἡμέρα, a good time, they have laid by their offering mony, and if they can gaine their new clothes, they purpose to receive in the morning, and meet with the young men of the next Parish, you know where in the afternoone. Whereupon one more serious then the rest, askes them with teares, whether they understand the nature of the Sacrament, the meaning of that morsel of bread and sip of wine; he finds them all ignorant, not discerning the Lords body, tells them of the great danger of going to the Marriage feast, without the wedding garment, they would eate and drinke judgment to themselves. At this some steale away, but others desire him to go on, tis agreed among them to retire unto the next private house for conveniency; and the rather because in many places all acts of Religion are scorned, but what are performed as it were in the *market place and in the corners of the streets.* Well, the honest hearted Christian begins with that of the Apostle. *The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed, tooke bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it and said, take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me: after the same manner also he tooke the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new Testament in my blood, this do ye as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me.* Wherein he bids them marke

1 Cor. 11. v. 23—25.

1. Who is the Author, Jesus Christ, his table you go to, look to your selves: *Adam* lost all by eating of the tree of Knowledge, you may do so too by eating of that bread of life.

2. The time, the night wherein he was betrayed, these are the words of a dying man, which should be remembred, he hath a Legacy to bestow, worthy to be accepted, he is now, even now giving his body, not to the dust, but to penitent sinners. O the deare love and the care of Jesus towards the children of men! though the time was now drawing nigh that he must drinke up the cup of his fathers wrath, and having sweat out some of his blood in the garden, was to loose the rest upon the Crosse: yet all this could not stop the course of his affections, nor shut up the bowells of his mercy, nor divert his thoughts from our Salvation to his owne suffering, but *comedentibus illis*, even while he was eating his last bit, in the very night that he was betrayed, he takes care to give to his Disciples, this φάρμακον ἀθανασίας, this potion of immortality and bread of eternall life.

Dr. Reynolds med. on Sacram.

3. The matter of the Lords supper, bread and wine, the invisible

ſible matter is the body and blood of Chriſt. Indeed the table of Chriſt hath no outward pomp and beauty; this Sacrament is the picture of him who was a man of ſorrows, and drawne in the day, when Gods fierce wrath was upon him: but what then, will you deſpiſe it? God forbid. Chriſt can feed thouſāds with a few loaves. While we have bread we feele no famine, where there is Chriſt, there is no want: he is our bread and wine, we may live with him; if we live to him, we cannot live without him. *Vita panis, vita Chriſtus.*

4. The actions of Chriſt.

1. *Accepit panem*, he tooke bread, ſo he tooke upon him our nature, the ſeed of Abraham, and became *Emanuell*, God with us: this is the great myſtery of Godlineſſe, God manifeſted in the fleſh. *Deus & homo, mater & virgo.* 1 *Tim.* 3. 16.

2. *He gave thankes*, or as tis expreſſed in another place, *he bleſſed*; this was Chriſts ſetting apart the bread and wine from common uſe, to a holy and ſolemne uſe: he gave thanks, and yet little comfort he had from the world in his life, and leſſe he was to have in his approaching death; yet he gives thanks. Chriſt had his delights from everlaſting with the Sons of men, (i. e.) in contriving the buſineſſe of their ſalvation in laying the plot and deſigne of it, and when he came ſomewhat neer the *conſummatum eſt*, the accompliſhment of it, he told his Diſciples, *deſiderio deſideravi*, I have a huge, great, and earneſt deſire to eate with you: and therefore in the very night wherein he was betrayed, he takes the bread, and gives thanks to God the Father, for the leaſure and opportunity of celebrating his laſt ſupper, for the redemption of the world; deſiring with all that the bread and wine might nouriſh up the ſoules of his Diſciples to eternall life. *Prov.* 8. 31.

3. *He brake the bread* and poured forth the wine; ſo was his body broken, and his blood poured forth for our tranſgreſſions.

4. *Take*, Chriſt gives the bread and wine; God ſo loved the world, as to give his Son, and ſo loved the world as to give himſelfe: Chriſt is the greateſt gift, of deareſt love; as he then gives himſelfe to thee, ſo do thou give thy ſelfe to him.

5. *Eate and drinke*: but what is it, O Jeſus! that they muſt eate and drinke? That body of which thou ſaidſt to *Mary*, touch me not, for I am not yet aſcended: muſt not ſhe touch thee, & muſt we feed upon thee? This *accipe & comede*, take, eat, notes not

a carnall feeding upon his flesh now in glory, but a spirituall feeding of the Soule upon Christ under the *species* of bread & wine.

6. The* verball action as one calls it, *this is my body*, which was broken for you. O happy soule! as *Moses* found God in the bush, so thou mayst find him in the bread.

Joh. Denison his sacram. Banquet. p. 135.

5. The end of it, *this do in remembrance of me*, behold this Crucifix: as the Master of the feast said, friend, how camest thou hither? so will Christ say one day to every communicant, friend wherefore camest thou in hither? then happy shall that man be, that can say, Lord, I came to remember thy death, that so my faith may be strengthned, my sin mortified, and my pardon sealed. And having gone thus farr, he exhorts them to examine and judge themselves here, that they may not be condemned by the Lord; desiring them but to consider, whether it be not meet to cleanse the roome where the Lord must lie, to come with broken and bleeding hearts, to receive a broken and bleeding Jesus, and to pray that that blood of Christ which was once poured forth for them, may now be poured forth upon them, that as Christ died for sin, they may dy to sin, and never returne to folly more. Having said thus, the whole company gives him hearty thanks, intreating him as oft as he can to meet with them and instruct them, he promiseth, seeing they so please, weekly at the same place and time, to come to them, bringing with him some godly able Christians, who in their course shall share with him in the worke; and it may be, they will prevaile with their Minister to come and oversee them and encourage them. Now tell me Reader is not this edifying? is not this interpreting? is not this exhorting and instructing, teaching and admonishing? cannot some private Christians do thus? may not some private Christians do thus? Hath this private man intruded into the Ministers office or no? hath he leaped over the bounds which Christ said he should not passe? I hope thou wilt say he should not be troubled, *he hath wrought a good worke*, and not say as they did; *ad quid perditio hæc?* why was he prodigall of his grace? But because all men are not of one mind, I will lay downe the thoughts of some others in their owne words, and leave the world to judge. *Metuebant enim malum, si contra publicam persuasionem faterentur quod erat verum. Lactant. Instit. l. 1. c. 19.*

Matth. 26. v. 8. 10.

Frat. Correp. p. 5

Dr. Hammond, Charitative fraternall correption, is not any mans peculiar

peculiar province, or enclosure, but the engagement and duty of every Brother, or common Christian; this is one step to the worke, the other Testimonies will be full.

Dr. Sclater, speaking of edifying, *it is true, that in the manner of performing, something there is in all these, peculiar to Ministers. Thus conceive this mutuall edification to differ from that we call ministeriall. First the one is with Authority, the other out of social charity. Secondly to do these things in the congregation is so peculiar to the Ministry, that he is guilty of usurping the honour of Aaron that intrudes upon it; yet in the Family and private conversation the duties belong to all.* Exposition on 1 Thes. 5.11.

Presently after he comes with a question, which some would make, and then answers it.

Q. *Forsooth every man shall beare his owne burthen, and whereto serve our Ministers?*

R. *God hath laid this charge upon every mans Conscience, to admonish and exhort: the precept is not only to turne, but to cause others to turne, and the sins of others which thou art bound to hinder, by not hindring become thine. The duties in publike concerne the Ministers; but is it for nought that you are called a kingdome of Priests? and have all received an oyntment from the Father?* To this which the Dr. hath said, I will add out of *Trap*, that *this oyntment must smell all Gods house over.* Ezek. 18.30. Rev. 1.6. 1 Iohn 2. 20. Loc. com. of admonition.

Rutherford drawes up *Robinsons* argument thus. *Those who are to watch, to knit together the Saints, to edifie them, have received the keyes and are governers, and Officers, but all the faithfull are to watch, to knit together the Saints.* Ergo. *First the Major is false, for if because the Saints may edifie, they shall have joynt power and use of the Keyes with the officers, they may administrate the Sacraments. Now because they may in a Christian way do some acts of edifying, it followeth not, that therefore they may do these acts by power of the keyes, and with an Ecclesiasticall and Church power, they may do the same duty*, ergo, *with the same power. A Scholler may teach his Schoolfellow the same lesson, that his Master doth teach him*, ergo, *he may do it by the same magisteriall authority: a wife may cure a disease*, ergo, *she may by the same authority that a Dr. of Physick, approved by the incorporation of Physitians, cure a disease, it followeth not.* Due right of Presbyt. p. 33.

Dr. Field. An authenticall interpretation, which is not only true, but so clearly and in such sort, that every one is bound, to imbrace and receive it: as before we made 3 kinds of judgment, one of discretion, com- Of the Church l. 4. c. 16.

mon to all; the other of direction, common to the Pastors of the Church; and a third of Jurisdiction, proper to them that have supreme power in the Church: so likewise we make three kinds of interpretation, the first private; and so every one may interpret the Scriptures, (i.e.) privately with himselfe, conceive or deliver to other what he thinketh the meaning of it to be. The second of publike direction, and so the Pastors of the Church &c.

Comment. on Ephes. c. 4. 16.

*Mr. Bayne. How this (*speaking of edifying) *can be a duty belonging to private Christians, seeing they are the building, the Ministers of the word are the builders.* Presently after he answers thus.

We must know, first, that God doth build this body: on this rock I build this Church. Secondly, the Ministers of God: I as a Mr. builder have laid the foundation, and others build thereupon. Thirdly, every private Christian hath a part in it. The difference is this, God doth put out all the efficacy and vertue that doth create this body, the Ministers are instruments publike, whom he hath joined to himselfe by vertue of publike callings, how shall they preach except they be sent? Every private Christian is an instrument privately doing that which the Minister doth in publike, by vertue of the bond of brotherhood, or some more near relation.

Mr. Baxter speaking of the Assemblies larger Catechisme;

Confession of his faith. p. 19.

Where it is said the word of God is to be preached only by such as are sufficiently gifted, and also duly approved and called to that office; I understand it only of that sort of preaching which is proper to Ministers, beleiving that there is also a Preaching, that a Master may use in his Familie, and other Christians occasionally: and herein I doubt not, but I hit their sense.

And if so, then here are Authorities, and good Authorities in great abundance.

Cap. 3.

Containing an Answer to all the Objections, which are usually made against private mens interpretings.

I come now to the objections, which are made against private mens interpretings. Some of them have been a thousand times answered already; as *Chillingsworth* saith of those which *Dr. Potter* made and answered, yet they must be spoken to againe.

Religion of Protest. preface to the Reader.

Ob. 1. These private men have not the languages, how then can they interpret.

R. To

R. To this I borrow an answer from *Dr. Taylor*: *Consulting the Originall, is thought a great matter to interpretation of Scriptures: but this is to small purpose, for indeed it will expound the Hebrew, and the Greeke, and rectifie translations; but I know no man that saies, that the Scriptures in Hebrew and Greeke, are easie and certain to be understood, and that they are hard in Latine and English: the difficultie is in the thing, however it be expressed, the least is in the language.* *Dr. Jer. Taylor. lib pro. Sec. 4. num. 5.*

Obj. 2. Private mens interpretings, leads them into errors, the Scriptures being too darke and obscure for them.

R. Upon this score indeed the Propheſies of the *Sibills* were locked up from the ὁ πόλλοι, the people. *Causa hujus occultationis fuit, ne privati homines, & factiosi, auctoritate Sibillarum freti, aut in patriis ceremoniis, aut in publicâ re aliquid novarent.* And for the same reason, the Papists to this day wrapp the Scriptures up in an unknown tongue. And here I will call to mind the Answers which were once thought to be sound against the Papists. *Is. Causab. ib.*

The way to the true Church sect. 6. num. 11.

Dr. White. *It is a common reproach laid upon our people, that they read the Scriptures in their houses, and the translations thereof be nothing else but profanations of the Bible; and this graceleſſe conceit, like blaſphemous Atheists, they urge as rudelie, exclaiming withall, that this is a principall cause to increase heresies and such like: all which being compared with the practise of the Primitive and Apostolicall Church, you may freely judge how trulie the Jesuit saith afterward, his Romane Church never altered one point of Religion; for thus writeth Theodoret of his times. You shall every where see these points of our faith, to be knowne and understood, not onlie by such as are teachers in the Church, but even of Coblers, and Smiths, and Websters, and all kind of Artificers, yea all our women, not only they which are book learned, but they also which get their living by their needle, yea maid-servants and waiting women, & not citizens only, but husbandmen of the Country are very skilfull in these things, yea you may heare amongst us Ditchers and Neatheards and Woodsetters discoursing of the Trinity and the Creation: the like is reported by others, and what marvaile? for the Laity was accustomed to the text of the Bible as well as the learned, young Children and women as well as others; and & his doctrine that was Presidet in the Trent Cospiracy, that a distaffe was fitter for women then a Bible was not yet hatched. Nectarius of a Judge, was made Bishop of Constantinople, and Ambrose of a Deputy, Bishop of Millan, Gregory the Father of Nazianzen and Thalassi-*

su Bishop of Cæsarea, of Laymen were made Bishops; which shews how diligent Laymen were in the word of God, that they could be able to sustaine the office of a Bishop. Origen from his Childhood was taught the Scriptures, and gat them without booke, and questioned with his father Leonides an holy Martyr, who rejoiced in it, about the difficult senses thereof. So Macrina, Basils nurse, taught him the Scriptures of a Child, after the example of Timothy: and Emesenus from his Infancy was used to the word of God: manie Laymen among whom was the famous Paphnutius, being very learned, came to the Nicene Councell. Gorgonia the Sister of Nazianzen was well learned. Hierome writes of Paula a Gentlewoman, how she set her maids to learne the Scriptures, and many of his writings are directed to women, commending their labour in the Scriptures, and encouraging them thereto, as to Paula, Eustochium, Salvina, Celantia &c. which he would not have done, if he had been a Papist. It was the reproach that Julian the Apostate laied upon the Christians, that their women were medlers with the Scriptures; and from him the Papists have borrowed it: but the Apostles counsell is rather to be followed, let the word of God dwell in you plentifully, in all wisdome teaching and admonishing your selves; upon which place saith Hierome; hence we see that Laymen must have the knowledge of the Scriptures, and teach one another not only sufficiently but also abundantly.

Preface to the N. Testament against the Rhem.

Dr. Fulke. *With reverence of Gods mysteries, and to that end they were given, every man might not only without reprehension, but with good liking and commendation of the godly Fathers: read, reason, dispute and search, which is to turne and tosse the bookes of the Scriptures.*

In Col 3 16.

Bishop Davenant. *Si hoc genus argumenti valeret, Deus, Christus, & Apostoli peccârunt, qui promulgari voluerunt verbum Dei promiscuè omnibus; non obstante hoc, quod multi eodem abutebantur ad suam pernicium. 2 Pet. 3. 16. Praterea, esset hanc ob causam Clericis æquè ac Laicis neganda lectio Scripturarum; nam & illi sæpenumerò pessimè abutuntur Scripturis. Quis enim nescit, omnes ferè hæreses ab Episcopis, Presbyteris aut Monachis fluxisse, non à Laicis & Sæcularibus. Testimonia ferè tot habemus, quot hæreticorum nomina.*

2. Many private men of good heads and honest hearts, by their paines and industry, though unlearned, attaine to great knowledge in the Scriptures; insomuch that wicked men are hardly able to withstand the power, by which they speake, but that their consciences are relieved with the common report, that such a man is

a Tub-preacher, and it matters not what he saith. I desire the Reader, who ever he be, to consider of what *Dr. Wilkins* hath concerning prayer, and then let him tell me whether much of it might not be said concerning interpreting. *Discourse concerning the gift of prayer. p. 26.*

Those things that we learne for practise, we learne by practise, saith the Philosopher; and that is one reason why many ignorant men do sometimes in this gift excell those that are much more eminent for Learning and Knowledge; because though these do better understand the rules and theory, yet the other do practise more, and by that meanes attaine to a greater readinesse and facility in this gift: and this likewise is the reason, why in these latter times, divers men have attained to a greater prehemineence this way, then was usuall heretofore, because formerly this kind of study and indeavour was lesse in use. Men did generally confine themselves to particular formes, & did not make it their businesse to improve in this ability. Againe; p. 12. And if it be a fault not to strive and labour after this gift, much more is it to jeer & despise it, by the name of ex tempore *prayer, and praying by the spirit; which expressions, as they are frequently used by some men by way of reproach, are for the most part a signe of a prophane heart, and such as are altogether strangers from the power and comfort of this duty.*

3. What if some of those private Christians cannot deliver their minds so readily and gracefully as might be wished? shall all of them be despised? and may not those weaklings, in time grow up to some perfection? * are we sure that God who knoweth the mind of the spirit, may not owne their labour of love and their freewill offering? *Pliny. Animadverto etiam Deos ipsos non tam accuratis adorantium precibus, quam innocentiâ & sanctitate lætari, gratioremq; existimari, qui delubris eorum puram castámq; mentem, quam qui meditatum carmen intulerit.* The English of it I find in Mr. Baxter. *This is the unhappy case of many men of learning, and good parts, they are so sensible of the evill of the exorbitancy of the times, that they overlooke and regard not the evill of their owne heartlesse and unfaithfull administration. If they heare a private man use some unfit expressions in prayer, it extreamly offendeth them, but if they totally omit it, they are not much offended at it: they forget that God will beare more with many slips of the tongue, and unhandsome words, then with the neglect of his worship, or a heartlesse performance of it, and that their well dressed forms if livelesse, are stinking carcasses, and useless pictures, when a broken heart with broken expressions, may go away with the blessing: and therefore they are commonly against private mens praying together, especially before many, and as the Papists would drive them from*

* *Curia prætexto quæ nunc ni et alta senatu, Pellitos habuit rustica corda patres.* Lactant. Instit. l. 2. c. 7.

Panegyr. Trajan.

Preface to Confession of faith.

the Scripture, for feare of abusing it, so would they drive them from such prayer, least they should hap to use some unhandsome words.

4. What if these men should not give the proper meaning of those texts they pretend to interpret? their discourse may be justifiable from other places of Gods word, and very edifying notwithstanding. I do not looke upon such a misinterpretation, as false doctrine, no more then I take that to be false Latine, when one pointing with his finger to the earth, cryed out, *O Cœlum!*

Dr. White. Though the proper interpretation be some time mistaken, yet the truth is not alwaies thereby obscured: for heare what Austin saith, he errs not perniciously, neither doth he altogether say untruly, who sometime expoundeth otherwise then the text meaneth, if so his exposition further charity, the end of the commandement. He is indeed deceived, but yet so, as when a man loosing his way through a by-field, cometh whither the way leadeth: his meaning is, that in many cases wrong expositions hinder not the determinate and plaine judgment of the text.

Ib. p. 20.

5. Was there never any good done by these private men? did Christ never shew himselfe present with them? *Erasmus* thought the blessing of God would attend the indeavoures of sincere private Christians. *Ego verò puto vel nautis esse fas &c. fortasse & Christus qui pollicitus erat sese adfuturum, ubicunq; duo convenirent, de ipso tractantes, aspirabit nobis tam multis.*

Relig. Conviv.

Must we slight the great things God wrought by *Ædesius* and *Frumentius* among the *Indians*, that we may δουλεύειν ὑποθέσει, serve an Interest? or passe by unthankfully that which is reported by *Ruffinus* of the captive woman, that converted the *Iberians*?

Socrates Eccles. hist. l. 1. c. 15.

Hist. Eccl. l. 1. c. 10.

Doe we not find in *Theodoret*, that a Priests Son was gained by a godly woman, and that the Son did afterward turne his Father from Idolatry, when *Julian* was dead?

Eccles. hist. l. 3. c. 14.

Were not women appointed by a Councell to fit the more ignorant of their owne sex for Baptisme, and to teach them how they should live afterwards?

Caranza. Con Carth. 4. can. 12.

Did not the Bishop of *Cæsarea* & *Hierusalem* justifie the preaching of *Origen* before his ordination by good authorities, when they urged severall examples of godly Brethren, who were exhorted by learned men, and holy Bishops to preach, adding withall that twas no unusquall custome in other parts? or shall we say that these godly Brethren did not good but rather hurt? Much might be said of this nature from the *Waldenses*, & *Albigenses*, of our own times. But I will passe to another objecti-

Euseb. Eccles. hist. 6. c. 19.

objection, desiring those whom it concerns, to deliberate, whether or no the miscarriages of private meetings might not be prevented, if that time were spent in overseeing them, which is spent in railing against them.

Ob. 3. Taken from the Scriptures, 2 *Pet.* 1. 20. *no Propheſie of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.* 1 *Cor.* 12. 30. *do all interpret?*

R. 1. To that in the 2 *Pet.* 1. 20. it shall be answered by opening the text; in which 3 things may be considered.

1. What is meant by interpretation.

R. The word in the Originall comes from ἐπιλύειν, which signifies as it is used by the Septuagint, *abſcondita & occulta interpretari.* To interpret what was crypticall and darke, the understanding whereof a man attaineth not unto, no more then *Ioseph* could to the sense of the dreames, without speciall and extraordinary light from God. Hence the Prophets, by whom God gave the Scriptures, are said to be *interpretes divinæ voluntatis*, to be interpreters of Gods will, making those things manifest, which were occult before; and hence also these Prophets are called by the *Ancients* ἐνθουσιασταὶ, (i.e.) men acted, carried out of themselves, to say and do what God would have them; so that their interpretation of Gods will, was an ἐπιφάνεια, a revelation, an inspiration; *Prophetarum oracula non esse humana commenta, sed divina mandata.* (i.e.) The Prophets writings of the old Testament, were not the *figmenta*, the inventions of their owne heads, but the commands of God. *Cameron myro. Evan. in loc.* *Heinsius in* v. 21.

2. What by *private*?

R. *Private*, 1. is not here opposed to the interpretation of the Church, which the Papists talke of. Nor 2. to the interpretation of men that are ordained and in office. But 3. by private interpretation is meant that which is humane and from man, in opposition to that which is from God. So that here is nothing at all directly spoken concerning the interpretation of the Scriptures, when men *heare them or read them:* and for ought I know, the interpretation of the most learned Dr. when tis erroneous, may be called a private interpretation; when the interpretation of the meanest private Christian being sound and wholsome, must be call'd by a better name. In one word, by private interpretation is meant humane interpretation: the Scripture is not from man, but from God. I might give many authorities of learned men for this expositon which I have made, cheifly out of *Cameron*; but I will satisfy my selfe with *Beza*, *nec enim propriam interpretationem, opponunt communi* *Annot. ma. in loc.*

communi, scil. publica, sed adventitium Spiritûs sancti donum, ei solertiæ, vel illi ingenii vigori, qui sit à naturâ hominibus quantumvis ingenioſis inſitus. And Henſius; *non enim ἐξ ἰδίας ἐπιβύσεως, ſive proprio inſtinctu, qui ὡσὶ τὰ πνεύματα φερόμενοι, (h. e.) ſoleni ſancti Spiritûs inſtinctu, ita διαφόρως locuti ſunt.*

Exercit. in N.T. in loc. 2 Pa. 1. 21.

2. Tis anſwered to that in 1 *Cor.* 12. 30. *do all ſpeake with tongues, do all interpret?*

1. The Apoſtle ſpeaks of extraordinary gifts.

2. Not confined to men in office, but given alſo to private Chriſtians as God pleaſed.

3. That he ſpake not of the interpretation of Scripture, as our controverſie intends, but of tongues.

Cameron ib. in 1 Cor. 12. 10.

4. That many times one had the gift of tongues, that had not the gift of interpretation, and therefore *cap.* 14. *v.* 13. he was to pray that he might interpret.

5. That to ſome men God gave the gift of interpreting the things delivered by thoſe that had the gift of tongues, and which did increaſe the miracle, as *Cameron* obſerves, they could interpret the tongues, they could not ſpeake in. Now judge (Reader) whether theſe texts, thus, and rightly, underſtood, are more to the purpoſe, then if a man ſhould have undertaken to have proved it unlawfull, for private men to interpret by that text, *Math.* 1. *v.* 2. *Abraham begat Iſaak, and Iſaak begat Jacob; Ergo* tis not lawfull &c.

Ob. 4. This meeting &c, is a gathering a Congregation or Church.

R. 1. I cannot conceive this objection to be made, by men of the Independent judgment, becauſe they allow private Chriſtians the liberty here contended for, and alſo inſiſt upon a Church covenant,

2. Neither will I beleive that any ſober men of the Epiſcopall or Presbyterial perſwaſion will owne it; becauſe I never yet obſerved them to ſay, that a Church was not an Organicall body, conſiſting of diverſe members, as eyes, eares, feet, &c. of ſome governing, and others governed. 1 *Cor.* 12. 14, 15. *Rom.* 12. 4–6. *Act.* 20. 28. or that deare affection, or cohabitation and living together, or that meeting in one Aſſembly make a Church, and therefore I will paſſe it, till I have more. I have not heard that any thing hath been ſaid by way of objection, but what I have here laid downe, although it being ſo eaſy a thinge to ſit at home and find fault, tis likely more may be ſaid: but let men take heed, they do not envy the grace of God to ſome, whoſe errors they pretend to feare, and become Patrons of ignorance,

whiles

whiles they would be thought to dispute against faction; in due time God may open our eyes to see, and bleedingly to lament the unhappinesse of our generation: we have been so long debating whether private Christians may read the word and interpret it, that we may truly say with *Chrysostome*, there are many do not know, whether there be any word of God, or no. *Et tamen post tanta, sunt quidam, qui nec sciunt an sint Scripturæ.* *Comment. in Heb. 5.*

Cap. 4.

Containing an exhortation to these private Christians with some Cautions.

HEre now a man might wish, with *Erasmus*, for the inclosure of all the Eloquence in the world to perswade men, but as he corrects himselfe, tis better to importune the assistance of Christ, who can without the λήνους, *lenocinia*, and ornaments of Rhetorick, give strength to prevaile with those I have now to do with. To you therefore, whose hearts God hath drawne forth to help your poor Brethren towards Heaven; to you I say, go on and prosper; you see your commission is good, your warrant is from God, you may, you ought upon occasion to teach one another: come then arise, arise, gird up your loynes, be not ashamed of the Gospell of Christ, tis the power of God unto salvation. What though men revile you, and speak all manner of evill of you, accounting you the περικαθάρματα and πρόσημα, the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things? Say with your selves, we are no better then our fathers, the servant is not better then his Lord, this is not resisting unto blood, this is nothing to what Iesus Christ suffered for us. O keep your eyes fixed upon the recompence of reward, and let your heart bleed for the scoffing *Ishmaells*, that will neither enter into the Kingdome of Heaven themselves, nor suffer those that would; but like the Swine in the Gospell, run from Christ into the Sea of perdition. When you heare men cry out against your meetings as uselesse, groundlesse and seditious, then pitty them, pray for them, bearing in mind, that Spirituall things are Spiritually discerned, and that these men are in the condition of *Harpaste* in *Seneca*, who having suddenly lost her eyesight, complained the house was dark. These men usually have an Altar, they do sacrifice, but tis *ignoto Deo*, to the unknown God, & like the *Sodomites*, are groping after the door of Heaven, and very hardly find it. Like the Vintner in the Gospell, have at first their best wine, and at last what is worse; though their

Paracl. ad Christi philos. studium.

Plin. ep. lib 1. ep. 2.

Epist 50. hæc fatua subitò desiit videre – ait domum tenebrosam.

Eccles. 12. v. 1. their head be of Gold, yet their feet will be of clay; ſtill worſe and worſe, till the dayes draw nigh, when they ſhall ſay, we have no pleaſure in them: O good it had been for them, they had never been borne.

To quicken you to your worke, conſider, 1. tis an excellent meanes to profit by the publike Ordinance, to meet often in private, to conferr upon the Scriptures, that ye may be able to underſtand the Miniſter in his Doctrines and Uſes. The Lord pardon our Nation, the language of the Goſpell to ſome is an unknown tongue, and the preaching of it is as ſounding braſſe, and a tinkling Cymball; becauſe Chriſtians will not teach and admoniſh one another, that the word of Chriſt may indwell in them. To others tis more familiar and welcome for a time, but this holy fire ſoon goes out for want of fuell. Who among us almoſt doth not weave *Penelopes* web, *ipſa texuit & retexuit*, what ſhe did weave in the day, ſhe did undoe in the night? Do not we learn and unlearn? what we learn on the Lords day, we forget on the working day; ſo that we may ſay of our coming to Church, as *Peter* of his fiſhing, *Maſter, we have travelled all day, and have taken nothing.*

2. You are bound to take the care of one another: doth the Lord commend to us the care of our enimies bodies, names, ſtraying Oxe? doth God take care for Oxen? will ye have no bowells nor compaſſion towards Souls, your friends Soules, your deare friends Souls, nay your owne Souls? was it not rude, bloody and profane *Cain*, that ſaid, am I my Brothers keeper? hath the Devill his agents? are there many Factors for Hell? many *Herods* that watch for the babes of *Bethlehem*? And will not you that are members of the ſame body, ſet by God as guardians one of another, παροξύνειν, quicken one another, and provoke unto love and good works? O indeavour to waſh your hands, to diſcharge your owne Souls, and let not your Brothers blood lie upon you.

Mant. in Jam. 5. 19. 20. 3. What an honour is it for you to be συνεργοὶ θεοῦ, coworkers with God? is it not a great favour that God ſhould make uſe of earthen veſſells, and caſt the glory of his owne free grace upon your labours? *Your pound gaines ten pound, nay ye gaine a brother. Mat. 18. 15. Jam. 5. 19, 20. Brethren, if any of you do erre from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he which converteth a ſinner from the error of his way, ſhall ſave a Soule from death, and ſhall hide a multitude of ſins.* Oh how happy will you be ere long? twill be a bleſſed day, when Chriſt ſhall appeare, when Miniſters ſhall walke into heaven with their flocks, and you alſo with your Converts, ſhining like the Sun in his glory.

And

And here let me advise you to take heed.

1. That ye despise not those that are set over you in the Lord, but honour them for their worke sake, suffer not one duty to crowd out another; as ye are bound to instruct others, so to heare them; remember the judgment of God upon *Corah* and his company, their Censer was kept by Gods speciall appointment, as a memoriall and warning to all posteritie. *Numb.* 16. 40. By whom did God call ye? by whom did God at first espouse you to Christ? was it not by the publike Ministrie? and must that now be despised? I hope better things from you. Is not this the way wherein Christ is wont to walke and heale? Surely this Ordinãce is the golden pipe through which he conveighs grace to the Soule. Stand in the Sun and ye shall grow warme. Walke in the garden of Roses, and ye will be perfumed with pleasant odours. Consider what *Abraham* said to him in Hell, *Luk.* 16. 29. *If thy five Brethren would not come, where you are, they have Moses and the Prophets, audiant ipsos, let them heare them.* In one houre ye may have the fruit of many dayes study: the Ministers gather *Manna* seed by seed, but they deliver it out by *Omers* and *Epha's* too. If ever your labour of love, turne to a labour of pride; if ever ye come to despise Gods Ordinance, know assuredly that God will blast all your indeavours.

2. That ye omit not to advise with some Godly and able Minister, especially in the first setting up of your Meetings, he can better judge of your abilities then your selves. Parents are fond of their owne Children, *we are too apt to delight in and admire the issue of our owne braines; to gaze upon our fine feathers, and forget our foule feet.

Quod fidum unquã animal consecrandum fuit, illud profecto fuit. Cicero of his Child, in Lactant. l. c. 15.

3. Be carefull in all your doubts to apply your selves to those, whose lips are to preserve knowldge; inquire of them, what is the mind of the Lord.

4. Meddle not with those places of Scripture which are darke and obscure, some places are δυσνόητα, ἀκροατικὰ, hard to be understood. 2 *Pet.* 3. 16. But observe the advice of the Psalmist, *tell what God hath done for your Soules*; let the worke of grace upon your owne hearts be a frequent text, thence interpret, and unfold the great mysteries of Gods deare love, fetching the best and most edifying proofs out of your owne bosomes: and when ye observe failings among your selves or others, choose those places of Scripture, which are most pertinent to your occasions.

Aul. Gellius. l. 20. c. 5.

5. Carry all things with humility and meeknesse; let no man affect the

the preheminence, preferring one another in love, sometimes heare, sometimes interpret, doing all things in order, decency, and to edification, that your good may not be evill spoken of.

6. See that ye do not only ὀρθοτομεῖν, but also ὀρθοποδεῖν, walke the word aright, as well as divide the word aright, let your discourse, your habit, your life be serious, that others may find as much holinesse in your conversations, as in your exhortations, that your presence may check sin, your faces shine as Angells, and your companie become terrible to impenitent sinners, that your greatest enemies may reverence you and be afraid to hurt you, as the barbarous *Gaule* was of *Marius*, though hired to kill him. You must be as starrs to lead to Christ, your lights must shine before others, ye are the looking glasse, others will dresse themselves by you: twas a sore complaint of *Seneca* of the Philosophers, *boni esse desierunt, simul ac docti evaserint*, the more learned, the lesse morall: as if the waters of the Sanctuarie had put out the fire of the Sanctuarie. Take heed while ye exhort others, ye your selves become not Castawaies; take heed that whilst ye are building an Arke for others, ye your selves do not perish. Twas so once, let it not be so againe, but let your knowledg be incarnate in your practise: twill appeare at the last daie, that one apple from the tree of good life, is better then ten from the tree of Knowledg.

Act. 6.15.

Plut in vit. Mar.

And now, O Lord, forgive all those, that speake evill of thy wayes; that grieve the hearts and weaken the hands of thy poor Servants, that are willing to build up one another in knowledge & holynesse. Even so Lord Jesus, Amen.

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